



Communist University Introductions

These texts may be used as “openings to discussion” of the original reading texts that are supplied by the CU. They are not intended to be authoritative, or conclusive. They are contributions to discussion like any other such contributions. The introductions are not a substitute for the reading texts.

This is the second of two booklets containing introductions to the CU “Basics” course.

Basics, Part 6



Wal Hannington, 1896-1966

Vanguard

In politics, the word “vanguard” means the professional force, human framework or “cadre” which can lead the mass movement of the people on a revolutionary path.

The relationship of the revolutionary vanguard to the mass organisations of the people is in some respects similar to the relationship of a doctor to the people, or of

accountants and lawyers to businesses, or of an architect or an engineer to builders and their clients.

The vanguard is made up of professional revolutionaries.

The revolutionary vanguard is a servant, and not a master. The vanguard party of the working class serves the working class. It does not boss the working class. Nor does it substitute itself for the working class.

The working-class vanguard party, which is the communist party, is not separate from the mass movement. It is intimately involved with the mass movement at all times and at all levels. The vanguard party educates, organises and mobilises. As a vanguard, it must have expert knowledge about how mass movements in general, and especially about how the primary mass organisations of the working class which are the trade unions, work.

To deal with this crucial matter (i.e how trade unions work) here, in the attached document (and download linked below), is a text from the Marxists Internet Archive's Encyclopaedia of Marxism, written by Brian Basgen and Andy Blunden, two comrades who clearly have vast experience of what they are writing about.

This text is empirical and experiential and there is nothing wrong with that, because experiential is exactly what trade unions and other mass organisations are. Trade unions arise out of the existing consciousness of workers as it is found under capitalism. In many ways, workers emulate capitalist forms of organisation. Their initial purpose is to get a better money deal in exchange for their labour-power in the capitalist labour-market.

Trade unions are therefore in the first place reformist, and not revolutionary. Nor can trade unions become revolutionary without the assistance of professional revolutionaries, organised separately as a communist party. Lenin dealt with this relationship in "What is to be Done?", which we will look at tomorrow.

Trade unionists who think that they can dispense with the assistance of a communist party – the ones known as "economists", "workerists" or "syndicalists" – are on a road to ruin.

Rules of Debate

Crucial to the democracy of mass organisations are the Rules of Debate and Procedure of Meetings. These are a bit like language, or [political education](#), or the Internet, in the sense of being communistic, and not given as authority. They are

not imposed by a “state”. There is no institutional enforcer of these rules. They exist in society, but without a “state” to enforce them.

For example, the South African Communist Party has no given Rules of Debate or Standing Orders. Unfortunately, this does not prevent people from claiming “Points of Order”!

The nature of the notional “rules” is such that they are only effective to the extent that they are understood in common by the members of any particular gathering, and enforced by these members.

Wal Hannington [1896-1966, pictured] was well known as a communist leader of the unemployed workers’ movement in Britain in the 1930s. Our summary of his 1950 booklet “Mr Chairman” is included with this item on Trade Unions because communists involved in trade unions need this knowledge of rules of debate and procedure of meetings, as well.

Hannington wrote: "The Chairman is there to guide the meeting, not to boss it." This is the most valuable message in his book. The Rules of Debate and the Procedures of Meetings are only justified to the extent that they liberate the people present. They become useless when they are felt as a burden or as an obstruction.

The point is not for the Chairperson to “keep order”, or for individuals to be bullied down with “points of order”. The Chairperson serves the meeting, and the meeting needs to know how to guide the Chairperson. Everything works best when everybody is familiar with the generic Rules of Debate.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Worker Solidarity and Unions, MIA, Meetings, Hannington.](#)

Basics, Part 6a



Syndicalism

These Generic Courses are designed for self-organised Freirean study circles, meeting on a regular weekly basis with no outside lecturer. So there is a main text for each week. This week, our main text has been “**Worker Solidarity and Unions**” from MIA, combined with Procedure of Meetings, based on Wal Hannington’s “**Mr Chairman**”. An introduction to these texts was sent out under the heading “**Vanguard**”.

As well as a main text each week, there is usually one, or more than one, supporting text, which may be regarded as supplementary, alternative, or additional reading. This week the supporting text to this discussion of the workers’ mass organisations and their necessary counterpart, the revolutionary Party, is made up of extracts from Lenin’s “[What is to be Done?](#)” (attached; download linked below)

“Demagogues are the worst enemies of the working class”, wrote Lenin, in this book.

Workerism

In “What is to be Done?”, Lenin was concerned to oppose what he called “economism”, which is also called “syndicalism” and in South Africa in the past and still up to now, “workerism”.

Lenin was concerned to show (following the publication of Eduard Bernstein’s gradualist “[Evolutionary Socialism](#)” and Rosa Luxemburg’s “[Reform or Revolution?](#)”) that a revolutionary transformation of society was not possible without a professional, revolutionary, political party of the working class. Trade union organisation of the working class was never going to be sufficient.

In the process Lenin was moved to denounce demagoguery in the severest terms (see the quote above, which is taken from the text that we are using today). One reason that Lenin denounced demagogues so emphatically is because they misrepresent themselves as being “left” or revolutionary, when in fact they are “right”, and in particular gradualist, reformist and class-collaborationist.

Worker’s Control?

Sometimes syndicalism arrives at a point where it proposes, demagogically, “worker’s control” under capitalism. Marx and Lenin both denounced such tomfoolery – see, for example, Marx’s “[Critique of the Gotha Programme](#)”

Lenin showed that the worker's political party, the communist party, remains a "must-have". To achieve its goals the working class must combine in a vast association of the whole nation; whereas the syndicalism of individual factories or isolated mines is nothing more than a reversion to petty-bourgeois consciousness, in conditions where such petty-bourgeois behaviour is hopelessly subordinated to a bourgeois market that it cannot possibly control.

How will they sell their products, unless on the terms of the Imperialists? This is why we say that demagogy is nothing but the class enemy's message, dressed up and re-sold in fake-revolutionary clothes. Demagogues will even be found denouncing the real revolutionaries as fakes.

When in doubt about such things, it helps to study; and Lenin is a good person to study, because he was good at telling the difference between genuine things, and fakes. Especially, Lenin opposed syndicalism, workerism, gradualism, reformism and economism, all of which still exist today.

"What is to be Done?" is the book where Lenin most clearly differentiated the reformist mass organisations from the vanguard political party of the working class, which is the communist party. The downloadable file contains the most directly relevant passages.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [What is to be Done, Workers and Revolutionaries, Lenin.](#)

Basics, Part 7



Negotiation

We proceed from an understanding of the vanguard-to-mass relationship between the communists and the working class, where the latter are **organised** in trade unions primarily for self-defence, (and not like the vanguard communist party, which is primarily organised for revolutionary purposes).

We included the [Rules of Debate](#) that are applied within those and other mass organisations.

We now come to the practical means by which trade unions do their business: **Negotiation.**

Negotiation is what two parties must always do in order to arrive at an agreement to exchange one thing for another, or in other words, to arrive at a common **contract**. In the case of trade union negotiations with employers, the two sides are trying to arrive at a bargain for the exchange of Labour-Power for money (wages).

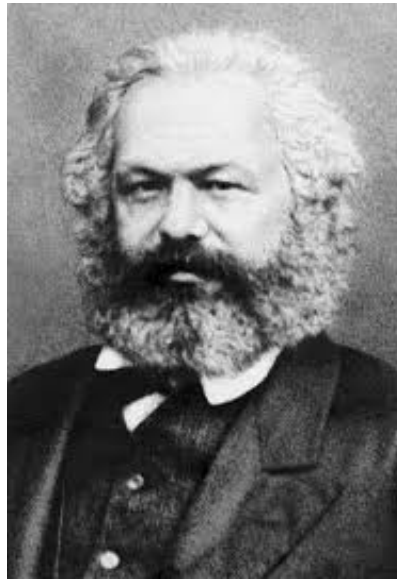
Inflation (a rise in the money prices of all commodities) makes it inevitable that the price of Labour-Power must also be re-negotiated at frequent, often annual, intervals. Contrary to what is often written about negotiations, there is no presumption of dispute about this process. On the contrary, the **invariable aim on all sides is to arrive at a bargain**. (If, as it appeared to be the case in the AMCU “strike” in the three biggest platinum mines in February, 2014, at least one if not both of the parties are not interested in having a bargain, then what is going on is NOT a negotiation, but something else.)

On the way to the bargain, there may be “failure to agree”, and sometimes there may be a “withdrawal of labour”, but there is no attempt to upset the relationship of boss and worker. The boss/worker relationship is confirmed, and not threatened, by the process of negotiation.

So long as there is “failure to agree”, people will talk of a “wage dispute”, and sometimes they will use military language to describe what happens. Yet even in military terms, as Clausewitz wrote in his book [“On War”](#), *“The Result in War is Never Absolute”*. In other words the combatants will inevitably have to live together in peace again, after the war.

Negotiation is a skill that can be learned. The attached document is a very good short introduction to wage negotiation. It comes from the MIA [Encyclopedia of Marxism](#).

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Negotiations, MIA](#).



[Karl Marx](#)

Value, Price and Profit

By 1865 **Karl Marx** (pictured) had long since solved the theoretical problems of his work on Surplus Value, “Capital”. In that year he gave the well-known address to a gathering of leadership, including worker-leaders of the First International, which was in danger of falling apart very soon after it was founded. That address afterwards became a popular publication under the name “[Value, Price and Profit](#)”(attached).

The first volume of “Capital” was published two years later.

This short book has served the labour movement well. Among other things, it debunks the argument, still attempted by employers and their apologists in South Africa today, that wage rises will cause unemployment (or that wage drops will cause employment, for that matter). In 2013, there was a concerted effort to bring back this argument via the bourgeois media, involving such disreputable right-wing propagandists as Leon Louw, Paul Hoffman, Ann Bernstein and Loane Sharp, together with some formerly more respectable ones like Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass.

The book shows how commodities, including commodity Labour-Power, are normally sold at their full value, and yet how, at the same time, the worker is getting swindled every day. It explains this apparent paradox, whereby the employer pays in full, yet gets more than what he paid for; and this is the secret of the self-increase of capital.

The book encourages workers to struggle for better wages and conditions, but it also (prefiguring Lenin's argument against "Economism" four decades later in "[What is to be Done?](#)") shows clearly why trade unionism, without separate political organisation, will never succeed in throwing off the yoke of capital.

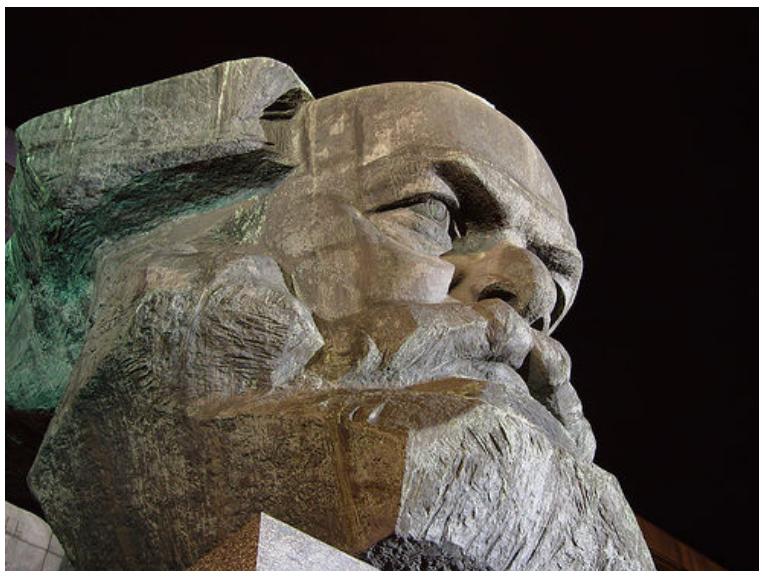
The abridged version of "Value, Price and Profit", attached, can serve as the short, or "basic", version of "Capital" that so many people long to have. It will help us to get a better grip on some of the key concepts in "Capital, Volume 1" such as Labour, Value, Labour-Power, and above all, Surplus Labour, Surplus-Value, and Profit.

To reduce the work to a manageable size for our dialogue purposes we have put aside several sections of "Value, Price and Profit". But the work is available on the Internet for anyone who would like to read it in full. The best source for Marxist classics in general on the Internet is the [Marxists Internet Archive](#) (MIA).

Here are the last words of "Value, Price and Profit":

"...the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the *conservative* motto, "*A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!*" they ought to inscribe on their banner the *revolutionary* watchword, "*Abolition of the wages system!*"

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Value, Price and Profit, Parts 6 to 10, Marx](#).
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Commodities

To supplement "[Value, Price and Profit](#)", here, attached, is a shortened (by removing one part) version of Chapter 1 of Karl Marx's greatest work, "Capital", Volume 1. This is a text that has been the material for many a political school. It begins with this tremendous definition of commodities:

"The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities,' its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity."

"A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production."

And Marx later says:

"A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it."

The second section of the chapter explores this dual character of commodities.

The third section, which contains quite a lot of formulas, is omitted for the sake of brevity. Sections of the chapter that have been left out can be read on [Marxists Internet Archive](#).

The fourth and last section of the chapter is on the Fetishism of Commodities, meaning that in a capitalist society the relations between commodities replace the relations between people.

In commodities, writes Marx,

“the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.”

If there is a single purpose for Marx's book “Capital”, it is to re-make human relations so that they are between humans again, or in other words, to restore human beings to themselves.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Capital V1, C1, Commodities, Marx](#).
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Lenin

The State

The main text today is Lenin's lecture, "[The State](#)" (attached; download linked below).

In "[Bourgeois and Proletarians](#)", the first section of the [Communist Manifesto](#), Karl Marx wrote: *"The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."*

In other words: The modern State is the executive committee of the ruling bourgeois class, of which there is, and cannot be, any other such ruling executive committee or totalising authority.

The State manifests itself in many ways. Not only is it Legislature, Executive and Judiciary, but it also includes the "Special Bodies of Armed Men" (police,

intelligence and military), the “sovereign document” of the Constitution, the State Owned Enterprises, “Delivery” departments like Education, Health, and Public Works; and others.

As communists we hold fast to the concept of the State as the instrument of class power that enforces and perpetuates bourgeois class dictatorship in our country. We do not believe that the State is neutral, or above class struggle. The State is the principal instrument of class struggle on behalf of the ruling bourgeois class.

We intend that there should as soon as possible be no class division, and therefore that the State as we know it would become redundant, and give way to social self-management, or in other words, to communism: true freedom.

Yet the term “State” is used in other, less strict senses, and we as political people who must communicate with others, do also use the word in other senses than the above. For example, we sometimes use the phrase “Developmental State”, which even if we ourselves would qualify its meaning, is nevertheless widely understood as meaning a State that is equally beneficial to all classes (i.e. it is a “win-win”, or classless, or neutral state).

We are fortunate to have the lecture that Lenin [pictured] gave to students in Moscow in 1919 on this topic, wherein Lenin asks *“what is the state, how did it arise and fundamentally what attitude to the state should be displayed by the party of the working class, which is fighting for the complete overthrow of capitalism - the Communist Party?”*

Lenin referred his audience to Engels’ [“Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”](#). Engels’ book sweeps through the whole human story and explains the fall of the women, as well as class struggle and the state. We will take it as our next item in this part, and then, for a fuller treatment from Lenin, there is the extraordinary work that he produced between the two Russian revolutions of February and October, 1917: [“The State and Revolution”](#), Chapter 1 of which will be our third item in this ninth part of our course.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Lecture on The State, 1919, Lenin](#).
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Origin of Family, Property and State

Today we feature Chapter 9, the chapter called “Barbarism and Civilisation”, of Engels’ book “[The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State](#)”. The Chapter is attached, and linked below as PDF download. You can safely ignore the first three paragraphs of the chapter. They refer to previous chapters. The remainder of Chapter 9 is self-contained.

“The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State” is a classic of the first rank, both within the field of Marxism, and more widely.

Lenin relied on this work. He referred to it often, for the illumination that it gives to the revolutionary question of The State, and to the necessity of the withering away of the State.

But this work of Engels’ is also foundational in Archaeology and Paleoanthropology (i.e. the study of the pre-history of human society), just as Engels’ “[The Condition of the Working Class in England](#)” was foundational to the study of the formation of cities, (i.e. Urbanism, also called Urban Studies or Town Planning).

Engels, who did not formally attend a university, is nevertheless one of the towering historic founders of scholarly disciplines.

Marx had already worked on source material for this project, including Henry Morgan’s 1877 book called “[Ancient Society](#)”. Engels found Marx’s working papers after Marx’s death in 1883. He immediately set to work to prepare a book from them for publication.

The special and particular contribution of “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” is that it shows the common, interdependent origin of private property and the State, plus the fall of the women into the oppressive condition which they subsequently continued to suffer, and also the original setting for the institutions of money, writing and law.

The simultaneous revolutionary break in all of these things marks the end of pre-history and the beginning of history, which as Marx and Engels had noted in the [Communist Manifesto](#), was from that point onwards “a history of class struggles”.

The transition from prehistoric communism into class society took place a long time ago in some parts of the world, and much more recently in other parts. In Egypt and in Iraq (Mesopotamia) it may have happened more than five thousand years ago. In most other parts of the world the transition was much more recent.

The simultaneous nature of the triple catastrophe (property, class-divided state, and the downfall of women) may mean that the remedy for all three will likewise have to be simultaneous. The urgent abolition or “withering away” of the State is for that reason a woman’s issue, and the socialist project is a woman’s project, because they are all part of the same complex of oppressions. Communism is a necessity for women.

The reversal of the downfall of the women can only be achieved by the abolition of property and the State. Likewise, the abolition of property and the State cannot be achieved without the conscious restoration of women to their proper place in human society. All three goals have to be achieved together. The three goals are actually the same goal, and the name of it is [communism](#).

Images: On the left, a painting by Tamara Lempicka of another way of imagining the origins of human society - Adam, Eve, and the Apple (The Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil); on the right, the frontispiece of the first edition of “Leviathan”, by Thomas Hobbes; and in the centre, money, token of contract, that can only exist where there is a state.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Origin of Family, Private Property and State, C9, Engels](#).
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Lenin

Class Society and the State

The first chapter from "[The State and Revolution](#)" is attached, and downloadable from the link below. Lenin wrote the book between the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, and the October 1917 proletarian revolution.

The October Revolution dramatically interrupted his writing, leaving the work unfinished.

SACP First Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin has remarked that South Africa is in some ways stuck “between February and October”, meaning to compare our SA situation during the 20 years since 1994 with the eight months in 1917 between the two Russian revolutions.

The urgency of Lenin’s revolutionary purpose is apparent from the first paragraph, as is the priority he gives to the understanding of The State as a product of, and integral to, the exploitative class-divided social system that the Bolsheviks were determined to overthrow, and therefore a matter of the highest revolutionary priority.

Hence the first words are a definition and a challenge to those who would think otherwise: *“The State: a Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Antagonisms”*

In the first paragraph Lenin refers to the embracing of “Marxism” by the respectable bourgeoisie, and their pleasure at the amenability of “the labour unions which are so splendidly organized for the purpose of waging a predatory war!”

The world war that was raging at the time was not merely an incidental background to the Russian Revolutions of 1917. As with the lethal global neo-liberalism of today, the warmongers had seduced the major part of the social-democratic organisations that claimed to represent the working class.

The organised structures of the working class had turned against the working class. If this had not happened, the First World War would have been impossible. The crux of the matter was the question, then as now, of The State.

Lenin is unequivocal:

“The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable.”

Lenin proceeds to write that the overthrow of the bourgeois state has to be direct and forcible, whereas the withering-away of the proletarian state can only be the indirect consequence of the progressive disappearance of class antagonism during the transitional period called socialism. "The State and Revolution" goes to the very heart of the revolutionary theory of class struggle, sharpens all contradictions, and draws clear lessons - lessons that are still relevant today, and especially in South Africa.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [State and Revolution, C1, Class Society and The State, Lenin.](#)
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[Issa Shivji](#)

National Democracy

In this, the last part of the CU Basics set, we touch upon the single biggest historic task of the Communists in the period since the founding of the [Communist International](#) (a.k.a. Third International) in 1919, namely National Liberation (decolonisation).

In 1920 the Comintern organised a [Congress of the Peoples of the East](#). It was the first international anti-colonial congress. The Comintern recognised Communist Parties in many countries (including South Africa's CPSA in 1921). In 1928 the Comintern and the CPSA adopted the "Black Republic" policy for South Africa, making the CPSA the first South African party to call for black majority rule. The CPSA was also the first non-racial party South African in terms of its own membership.

This is some of our part in the story; but the worldwide story of the past century, under the impetus of the Communists more than any other single political component, has been a story of political independence of the former colonies worldwide. The masses of the world have risen time and again in National Democratic Revolutions, with the invariable support of the Communists. Our internationalist duties still continue. Any political education "Basics" series must mention this.

Ever since the anti-colonial victories in so many (150-plus) countries, constituting the vast majority of the population of the globe, that set those countries free from direct colonial rule, the Imperialist powers have sought to re-impose themselves by other means.

One who has made the anti-Imperialist case very well in this regard is the Tanzanian professor Issa Shivji [pictured], to remind us that it is we freedom-fighters who are the humanists now, and it is the Imperialists who are the barbarians.

“African Socialism”



[Kwame Nkrumah, 1909 - 1972](#)

From the time of Eduard Bernstein and his 1899 book “[Evolutionary Socialism](#)”, and Rosa Luxemburg’s 1900 response to Bernstein, “[Reform or Revolution?](#)”, the same question has been put, in one way or another.

In the history of the struggle for liberation from colonialism in Africa, the question “Reform or Revolution” was once again put. To sound better and to deceive the people more easily, false “Socialism” was dressed up as “African Socialism”, and was widely used as a smokescreen for neo-colonialism from the dawn of African Independence in the 1950s and 1960s, onwards.

Dr Kwame Nkrumah spoke out firmly against this false so-called African Socialism more than forty years ago. See the linked article below. Although Kwame Nkrumah and his adversary Leopold Senghor are both long gone, yet Nkrumah’s words appear to carry as much relevant meaning as they did when they were spoken in Cairo in 1967.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [The Struggle for Democracy, Shivji](#); [African Socialism, Nkrumah](#).



William and Celia Pomeroy

Political and Military Struggle

Presuming that we have by now established that we are not pacifists, but are revolutionaries who intend, by all means necessary, to assist the working class to expropriate the expropriator bourgeois class; then why can we not move with speed, and without any restraint, towards an armed overthrow of the oppressors?

Why are we bothering with democracy? Are we not being “stageist”????

The late William “Bill” Pomeroy started his essay “On the Time for Armed Struggle” (linked below) from exactly this point of departure, as follows:

“Because of the decisive results that can follow from an armed smashing of the main instruments of power held by a ruling class or a foreign oppressor, some of those who acquire a revolutionary outlook are eager to move to the stage of armed struggle; and their concept of it as the highest form of revolutionary struggle causes them to cast discredit upon other forms as 'less advanced', as amounting to collaboration with or capitulation to the class enemy.”

But:

“Too often the aura of glory associated with taking up arms has obscured hard prosaic truths and realities in the interplay of forces in a period of sharp struggle.”

And later:

“The experiences of the revolutionary movement in the Philippines offer an interesting example of the complex, varied and fluctuating processes that may occur in a liberation struggle.”

Pomeroy writes that *“analysis and understanding of the revolutionary experiences of others is indispensable”*. He proceeds to offer some of his own rich and extraordinary experience as a military combatant and revolutionary, including the disastrous experience of the Philippines, when the military began to act independently of political control.

Pomeroy’s main lesson is that the military must never think that it can cease to be subordinate to the political power. The political organisation must always rule over the military.

His writing and his advice helped the ANC in the exile years, when Pomeroy was exiled in London. It is important that younger comrades read these things and understand some of the problems that had to be negotiated.

William Pomeroy passed away on 12 January 2009 and Celia Pomeroy passed away on 22 August 2009.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [On the Time for Armed Struggle, 1974, Pomeroy.](#)
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[Dedan Kimathi, 1920-1957](#)

The Armed People

A practical, actually-existing alternative to the bourgeois State – The Commune – arose in Paris, France, in the beginning of 1871.

It was more than the right of recall, and it was more than the whole people collectively in power and in perpetual democratic session. It was also the reappearance of The Armed People in a new kind of societal framework.

So-called Primitive Communism is an Armed People. Primitive Communism has been destroyed, and continues to be destroyed, by the simultaneous rise of property relations and fall of the women. But here, in the Paris Commune, was an Armed People in advanced productive circumstances. The Paris Commune prefigured the end of the bourgeois State's monopoly of violence, and the consequent eventual fall of the bourgeois State in the world as a whole.

The security forces (army and police) existing in France prior to the Paris Commune had been paid by the bourgeois State to guarantee its survival. They were tasked with suppressing the working class, whenever they found suppression to be necessary, by any means of suppression they thought necessary, and they were

therefore constantly prepared for bloodshed and slaughter. These forces were disbanded by the Commune and were not replaced until the Commune fell.

With hardly any exceptions, all “separations of powers” were abolished in the Paris Commune, leaving one main and constant power: The Armed People.

A century later in Chile, in the time of the Popular Unity government that fell on 11 September 1973, instead of an Armed People, a virtue was made of disarmament, and a “Peaceful Path” was worshipped as the new political Golden Calf.

In the document linked below, Volodia Teitelboim gives a brief description, from the point of view of one of those who was involved in the Chilean Popular Unity government, of its disastrous end. The fascists used the national army to overthrow the national government on behalf of the bourgeoisie. It was a shocking reminder of the real purpose and nature of the “special bodies of armed men” that are part of The State. They are intended to preserve the allegiance of the State to the bourgeoisie.

Teitelboim calls for “A Reappraisal of the Issue of the Army,” meaning a return to the view of the Paris Commune, which is mentioned in the first line of Teitelboim’s document. This document is sufficient as the basis for a very good and necessary discussion in South Africa at this time.

Like the Chilean Popular Unity government, ours in South Africa today is a multiclass government underpinned by a class alliance for common goals. It is a unity-in-action, otherwise called a Popular Front.

Why has the South African NDR survived for nearly 21 years, while the Chilean Popular Unity fell after 1,000 days?

The answer could be that we are not pacifists, as so many of the Chilean Popular Unity politicians were.

Or, the answer could be that our crisis has just not arrived yet.

Or, that we have passed at least one crisis, which may not yet be the last. That was in mid-2008, and it was resolved by the recall of President Mbeki and the resignation of various ministers including Terror Lekota and Mluleki George, Minister and Deputy Minister of Defence, respectively.

Also attached is Dimitrov’s famous intervention at the 7th Congress of the Communist International (Comintern), in 1934, which readopted popular front

tactics - tactics that proved successful in mobilising the anti-fascist alliance that was by 1945 victorious in battle.

Picture: There are very few images of freedom fighters in formation, in action, or ready for action, to be found on the Internet, whether of MK or of any other liberation army, but there are many photographs of freedom fighters in captivity, or dead.

Full justice has not yet been done. Alive or dead, the revolutionaries are still rebels and outcasts in the minds of the “respectable” bourgeoisie. For our part, we are still singing the Internationale, composed in Paris in the days of the Commune by the communard [Eugène Pottier](#).

The picture is of a statue of the freedom fighter Dedan Kimathi, under the blue sky of Kenya.

AMANDLA!

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [1,000 Days of Popular Unity Rule in Chile, 1977, Teitelboim](#); [Intervention on Popular Front, Dimitrov, 1934](#).
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[Joe Slovo, 1926-1995](#)

SA Working Class and the NDR

In this final part of our “Basics” course, we have looked at democracy, armed struggle, and popular unity-in-action, in terms of various countries of the world. Now we look again at South Africa, in the context of National Democratic Revolution. The NDR is not a South African invention. It is a worldwide phenomenon. But it has generated a specifically South African literature.

Joe Slovo published the [SA Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution](#) at a time when he was the General Secretary of the SACP. The Party was still clandestine. The end of its 40-year period of illegality was to come two years later.

Like many political documents, this pamphlet takes shape around a polemical response to contemporary opponents who may no longer be well-remembered (in this case it was the particular “workerists” and compromisers of the time that Slovo mentions on the first page of the document).

But as with the polemics of Marx, Engels and Lenin, in the course of the argument against otherwise long-forgotten foes, Slovo was obliged to set up a fully concrete, rounded assessment of the meaning of the NDR, which still remains today as the best single and definitive text on this matter in South Africa.

Slovo quickly establishes the class-alliance basis of the NDR and quotes Lenin saying that: *“the advanced class ... should fight with... energy and enthusiasm for the cause of the whole people, at the head of the whole people”*. This advanced class is the working class. Slovo goes on to write of the continuity of the NDR and of the institutional organisation that is the bricks-and-mortar of nation-building.

We link here an 8-page booklet of excerpts. The full, 36-page document is available. This instalment ends the “Basics” course.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The South African Working Class and the NDR, 1988, Slovo \(excerpts\)](#).